

**Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-Being in Ontario Presented by: Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE).**

**OAPCE Position Paper – April 2024**



# Position Paper

# Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-Being in Ontario

Presented by: Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE).

The preservation and promotion of publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario are vital in guaranteeing the success and well-being of students while also acknowledging and safeguarding the essential role parents play as the primary educators of their children.



## About OAPCE:

The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) is a supportive and collaborative organization dedicated to representing parents within the Catholic education system in Ontario. OAPCE is committed to advocating for the rights and interests of parents, promoting parent engagement in education, and fostering a strong partnership between parents, educators, and school administrators.

As a leading voice for parents in Catholic education, OAPCE works to ensure that the values and teachings of the Catholic faith are upheld in educational settings while also supporting the academic success and well-being of students. OAPCE provides resources, support, and advocacy initiatives to empower parents to take an active role in their children's education and to contribute to the overall improvement of the Catholic education system.

Through its collaborative efforts, OAPCE strives to create a network of engaged parents, educators, and stakeholders who are dedicated to preserving and promoting Catholic education in Ontario. By fostering a sense of community and partnership, OAPCE aims to enhance the educational experience for students and uphold the values of faith, excellence, and inclusivity within the Catholic education system.

## Summary: Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-Being in Ontario

The position paper emphasizes the critical importance of publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario to ensure the success and well-being of students. It highlights the crucial role of parents as primary educators and advocates for their rights within the educational system. The paper addresses key issues such as supporting student well-being and mental health, enhancing communication between parents and the school board, ensuring equitable access to quality education, promoting faith formation and Catholic identity, and advocating for parental involvement in decision-making processes. By addressing these concerns and focusing on collaboration, advocacy, and support, the paper aims to underscore the significance of preserving and promoting Catholic education for the benefit of all students.



# Table of Contents

- About OAPCE:..... 2
- Summary: Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-Being in Ontario..... 3
- Introduction: The Importance of Publicly Funded Catholic Education..... 5
- 2023 OAPCE Parent Survey..... 7
- Parent Engagement: The Role of Parents as Primary Educators..... 8
- Supporting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Catholic Education..... 9
- Enhancing Communication Between Parents and the School Board.....10
- Ensuring Equitable Access to Quality Education..... 12
- Promoting Faith Formation and Catholic Identity.....15
- Advocating for Parental Involvement in Decision-Making Processes..... 16
- Supporting Student Achievement and Academic Success..... 18
- Respecting the Parent Role as the Child's First Educator..... 20
- Addressing Funding and Resource Issues in Catholic Education..... 22
- Conclusion: Preserving and Promoting Catholic Education for Student Success..... 24
- References:..... 25

## Introduction: The Importance of Publicly Funded Catholic Education

The Catholic education system in Ontario, Canada, stands out for its emphasis on the active involvement of parents in their children's learning journey. Parents play a crucial role in ensuring a holistic and faith-based education for their children within the Catholic schools of Ontario. One of the distinctive features of Catholic education in the province is the strong

partnership it cultivates between schools and parents. The Catholic school parent councils across the province provide a platform for parents to actively engage in the decision-making processes within the school community, contributing to the development of school policies, fundraising initiatives, and the nurturing of a values-based environment.

The unique approach of Catholic education in Ontario in fostering a strong partnership between schools and parents is further supported by organizations such as OAPCE (Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education). These entities empower parents to actively participate in their children's education, thus ensuring a comprehensive and faith-based learning experience. Additionally, Catholic schools in Ontario promote the involvement of parents in their child's religious education, encouraging participation in family-focused faith activities that complement the teachings learned in the classroom.

The collaborative effort between parents and Catholic education institutions in Ontario underscores the significance of a well-rounded education that encompasses academic excellence, moral values, and spiritual growth. This partnership not only prepares students to become responsible, compassionate, and faith-driven individuals in the community but also reinforces the values and teachings of the Catholic faith both at home and at school. Publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic success and overall well-being of students, with parents serving as the primary educators guiding their children's academic and personal development.

The strong sense of community and belonging fostered by Catholic education in Ontario further emphasizes the importance of involving parents in educational initiatives and decision-making processes. Through active participation in their children's education, parents contribute to a connected and engaged school community where values and teachings are reinforced collaboratively. Ontario's Catholic education system thrives on the commitment of parents to engage in their children's education and faith formation, providing a comprehensive and enriching educational experience that prepares students for fulfilling and purposeful lives.



## 2023 OAPCE Parent Survey

In December 2023, the OAPCE Parent Survey was conducted to gather insights from parents in Catholic education in Ontario. This survey covered a variety of topics, including reasons for enrolling children in Catholic schools, involvement in parent school councils, the importance of OAPCE focus areas, challenges faced by parents, preferences for events and training by OAPCE, specific areas of interest, suggestions for improvement, and opinions on potential Ministry of Education policies.

Parents were asked to provide information on their child's school board, reasons for choosing Catholic education, current participation in parent school councils, the significance of focus areas like student well-being and communication with school boards, and the importance of parental involvement in decision-making. They were also questioned about current challenges, desired actions from OAPCE, event preferences, needed training/resources, and topics of interest for the upcoming year. The survey had over 750 respondents and sparked additional emails, meetings and conversations.

Additionally, parents shared their opinions on potential Ministry of Education policies relating to parental rights, cell phone usage in classrooms, and school presentations/speakers, offering feedback and suggestions on these matters.

The findings from the OAPCE Parent Survey will play a crucial role in shaping this paper. This research paper aims to highlight the vital responsibilities and opportunities parents have in shaping their children's education and spiritual growth within the Catholic education system. By recognizing and promoting the pivotal role of parents in education, the survey outcomes will help strengthen the collaboration between home and school, ultimately enhancing the overall development and academic success of students in Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools.



## Parent Engagement: The Role of Parents as Primary Educators

Parents are the very foundation upon which a child's educational journey is built, shaping their growth and learning right from the start. In the realm of Catholic education, parents step into an even deeper role, not only offering academic assistance but also instilling fundamental faith-based values within their children. The Catholic educational system places a high value on the role of parents as primary educators, recognizing the significance of their collaboration with schools in fostering the comprehensive development of students.

Parent engagement stands as a critical component in molding a child's educational path within publicly funded Catholic schools, providing a unique avenue for cooperation and guidance. By acknowledging and amplifying the essential role of parents as primary educators, we can fortify the connection between families and schools, ultimately enriching the educational journey and accomplishments of students in Ontario's Catholic education system.

"As representatives of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE), we believe that parents are not only the first but the most enduring educators in their children's lives. Our partnership with schools in shaping the educational and spiritual growth of students is paramount, as together, we instill values that go beyond textbooks, guiding our children towards a brighter future rooted in faith and knowledge." Annalisa Crudo -Perri, Co-Executive Director, OAPCE.



## Supporting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Catholic Education

In the realm of education, prioritizing the well-being and mental health of students is not just beneficial but imperative to creating a conducive learning environment. In the context of Catholic education, this holistic approach is embraced as a fundamental aspect of nurturing students' overall growth and development. Recognizing the importance of addressing students' emotional and psychological needs, Catholic schools have implemented various initiatives and strategies to support student well-being and mental health.

At the intersection of faith-based values and mental wellness, Catholic education strives to provide a nurturing environment that promotes the overall well-being of students. By integrating faith teachings with mental health support, Catholic schools aim to cultivate a sense of compassion, empathy, and resilience in students, equipping them with the tools to navigate the challenges they may face on their educational journey.

In the parent survey conducted by OAPCE in 2023, which involved over 750 respondents, insights were gained into the perspectives and priorities within the field of education, particularly focusing on supporting student well-being and mental health. Of all respondents who identified this as their top priority, a significant 88 percent emphasized the importance of this aspect, highlighting the vital role that holistic education plays in nurturing a supportive and caring environment for students.

In Catholic schools, initiatives such as counseling services, mental health awareness programs, mindfulness practices, and peer support groups are implemented to address the emotional and psychological needs of students. By providing a safe space for students to express their feelings, seek help when needed, and develop coping strategies, Catholic education prioritizes the mental wellness of students as a foundational element of their educational experience.

Moreover, the incorporation of faith-based values such as compassion, forgiveness, and understanding serves to reinforce the importance of empathy and positive relationships in promoting mental well-being. Through prayers, reflective practices, and discussions on faith teachings, students are encouraged to cultivate a sense of gratitude, hope, and resilience that can support their mental health and overall well-being.

By fostering a culture of care, support, and understanding, Catholic schools create an environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to prioritize their mental health. Through the integration of faith-based values and mental wellness initiatives, Catholic education emerges as a holistic and nurturing space that not only equips students with the academic tools for success but also nurtures their emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth.

“As advocates of student well-being and mental health initiatives in Catholic education, OAPCE acknowledges and emphasizes the critical importance of addressing the holistic needs of students. OAPCE is also witness to how our schools aim to foster a nurturing environment that enhances the emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth of each child. Their dedication to integrating faith teachings with mental health support highlights their commitment to nurturing compassion, empathy, and resilience in students, equipping them to navigate life's challenges with grace and strength.” - Joe Perri, Co-Executive Director, OAPCE.



## Enhancing Communication Between Parents and the School Board

Communication is not just a means of transmitting information but a foundation for building relationships and fostering understanding. In the context of Catholic education, where values of collaboration and community are deeply cherished, effective communication becomes even more crucial. It serves as the bedrock upon which successful partnerships between parents, school administrators, and the school board are built, creating a supportive and engaging educational environment for students.

Our recent survey's respondents shed light on the perspectives and priorities related to education, emphasizing the importance of communication, advocacy, and support within the educational system. The survey results revealed a strong consensus on the need to enhance communication between parents and the school board, underlining the significance of transparent and collaborative relationships in the educational journey of students.

Parents play a pivotal role as the primary educators of their children, imparting values, beliefs, and traditions within the family unit. Recognizing this pivotal function, support is extended to parents to empower them in their educational role, providing resources and opportunities for them to connect with fellow Catholic parents in Ontario. This support network not only enhances parental engagement but also strengthens the sense of community within the educational ecosystem.

Schools are not just institutions of learning but hubs of social and personal development for students. They shape students' academic growth, foster friendships, and provide opportunities for extracurricular engagement. By advocating for a robust partnership between parents and schools, efforts are made to ensure that parental voices are heard, and their input is valued in shaping the educational experiences of their children.

The words of Dianne Pawlowski, Director of Nippissing Parry Sound, resonate deeply in emphasizing the holistic nature of education: "Education is not just about imparting knowledge but also about nurturing the soul and fostering a strong Catholic identity." This sentiment encapsulates the mission of Catholic education, which goes beyond academics to encompass the spiritual and moral development of students.

The church community serves as a spiritual anchor for many families, offering a space for children to deepen their faith, partake in sacraments, and engage in religious practices.

Collaboration with church leaders is crucial in enhancing and promoting Catholic education, ensuring that spiritual formation is integrated into the educational journey of students.

Through OAPCE's collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Education and various educational partners, advocacy is carried out to uphold the importance of Catholic education and to ensure that parents' perspectives are considered in shaping educational policies and practices. By aligning the efforts of the home, school, and church, a cooperative environment is created that supports the holistic growth and development of students, nurturing their academic, spiritual, and personal well-being.

In essence, the unity and collaboration between the home, school, and church form a powerful alliance that serves as a supportive network for students to flourish and thrive in all aspects of their educational journey. This unity enhances the quality of education and fosters a sense of community and belonging that is integral to the ethos of Catholic education.



## Ensuring Equitable Access to Quality Education

Ensuring equitable access to quality education is a fundamental right that should be extended to all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or circumstances. In the realm of Catholic education, there is a steadfast commitment to providing inclusive and diverse learning opportunities that uphold the values of fairness and accessibility. This section delves into the various measures and initiatives implemented in Catholic schools to guarantee that every student has equal opportunities to receive a high-quality education. By championing inclusivity and accessibility, we aim to cultivate a more equitable educational environment that nurtures the academic success and overall well-being of each student. The 2023 OAPCE parent survey revealed that respondents identified ensuring equitable access to quality education as a top priority, underscoring the importance of inclusivity and fairness in educational opportunities.

In a pastoral letter for education, Ontario's bishops highlighted the "unique opportunity" that Catholic schools have in guiding young people through the social, ethical, and economic challenges of today. They emphasized the collaborative nature of Catholic education, stating that it is a privileged space, along with the family and parish community, where faith is imparted and nurtured to shape future leaders in the faith tradition. As the Most Rev. Bishop Mathieu, liaison Bishop to OAPCE stated in his Fall message to parents: "In today's world, this is not an easy mission. Your most important commitment is to continue to invest in your role as first and most influential educators of the children God gave you in his love. It requires from each and every one of us a renewed personal encounter with Christ, the risen Lord. Like any human being, your children's hearts desire God. You are the voice that reminds them on a daily basis that God's love is calling them.

During the annual lobby day at Queen's Park, OAPCE and many partners made a strong impact, underscoring the importance of collaboratively supporting Catholic education. Key stakeholders from the catholic community, highlighted the importance of demonstrating unity and cooperation among all partners in Catholic education to the province's elected officials at Queen's Park.

Representatives from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), the Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees' Association (OCSTA), and the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO), collectively known as Friends and Advocates for Catholic Education, spent the day lobbying the province's elected officials. Amid worries about potential education funding reductions and school closures, the importance of backing Catholic education was reaffirmed, with a focus on the significance of empowering parents to choose their child's schooling. OAPCE also participated to ensure that parents had a voice in this crucial advocacy effort.

During recent meetings with various MPPs from all three parties, including Minister of Education Stephen Lecce, there has been a positive response indicating a shared commitment to supporting Catholic education. Minister Lecce has shown his support for Catholic education by engaging with the group during lobby day. It's worth mentioning that as advocates for Catholic education, we work with current political leaders and respect their position and roles while remaining neutral when it comes to politics. Our focus is on championing equitable access to quality education for all students.

"Equitable access to quality education is not just a goal, but a fundamental right that must be upheld for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. In Catholic education, we are steadfast in our commitment to providing inclusive and diverse learning opportunities that embody the values of fairness and accessibility. By championing inclusivity and accessibility, we strive to create a more equitable educational environment that nurtures the academic success and overall well-being of every student." - Denice Garell-Teti, OAPCE Director and Chair.



## Promoting Faith Formation and Catholic Identity

Integral to Catholic education is the emphasis on promoting faith formation and nurturing a Catholic identity among students. This section delves into the ways in which Catholic schools infuse faith-based values and teachings into their academic curriculum and extracurricular activities. By examining the intersection of education and faith formation, we seek to understand the crucial role that Catholic schools play in instilling moral values, fostering spiritual growth, and cultivating a strong sense of Catholic identity in students.

The result of OAPCE's parent survey, identified as advocating for promoting faith formation and nurturing Catholic identity, was a top priority and shed light on the deep-seated commitment within the Catholic education community to instill spiritual values and beliefs in students. These respondents highlighted the enduring importance of integrating faith-based education into academic teachings and extracurricular activities to foster a holistic and enriching educational experience.

The emphasis on promoting faith formation reflects a recognition of the profound impact that religious teachings and values can have on shaping students' morals, character, and worldview. "By infusing Catholic principles into every aspect of the educational journey, schools aim to provide students with a strong foundation rooted in spiritual growth and a deep understanding of their Catholic identity, this is the reason why I, and many parents choose to send their children to Catholic Schools", reiterates Joel Tecson, Director for Toronto.

Furthermore, the survey results underline the sentiment shared by the respondents that education is not just about imparting knowledge but also about nurturing the soul and fostering a strong sense of faith. This holistic approach to education resonates with the core values of Catholic teachings, emphasizing the importance of moral development, community engagement, and spiritual enrichment alongside academic learning.

The strong advocacy for promoting faith formation and Catholic identity among students reflects a collective desire within the Catholic education community to create a supportive and nurturing environment where students can grow academically, spiritually, and personally. By prioritizing faith-based values and teachings, schools empower students to navigate life's

Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-being in Ontario



challenges with a strong moral compass, a deep sense of purpose, and a profound connection to their faith.

In essence, the survey results underscore the intrinsic link between education and faith formation in Catholic schools, highlighting the pivotal role that these institutions play in shaping well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also morally grounded, spiritually enriched, and deeply connected to their Catholic faith.

"As representatives of OAPCE, we firmly believe that promoting faith formation and nurturing a Catholic identity are essential components of Catholic education. Our focus is on infusing faith-based values and teachings into the academic curriculum and extracurricular activities of Catholic schools. Through this integration, we aim to instill moral values, foster spiritual growth, and cultivate a strong sense of Catholic identity in our students. This commitment reflects our deep-rooted belief in the transformative power of faith-based education to guide students in their moral and spiritual development." - Diana Carlesimo, OAPCE Director, Dufferin Peel.



## Advocating for Parental Involvement in Decision-Making Processes

Parental engagement serves as a foundational element within a thriving educational community, where parents actively participate in decision-making processes that shape their children's educational journey. In the context of Catholic education, there is a profound recognition of the essential role that parents play in molding their children's schooling experiences. This section aims to explore the significance of parental involvement in decision-making processes within Catholic schools and the array of benefits it brings to students, parents, and the wider school community. By advocating for increased parental participation, the collaborative partnership between parents and educators can be strengthened, ultimately enriching the overall educational outcomes and experiences of students.

In the OAPCE parent survey, a substantial number of respondents, totaling 436, expressed their endorsement for the promotion of faith formation and the nurturing of a Catholic identity, acknowledging the spiritual dimension of education. This widespread acknowledgment underscores the importance of integrating faith-based values into students' educational journeys, emphasizing moral growth, character development, and spiritual enrichment alongside academic learning.

From the parental perspective, there is a resolute belief in the right of parents to be informed about their child's education, particularly on sensitive topics. Parents are viewed as indispensable sources of support and nurturance for their children, uniquely positioned to offer the care and guidance crucial for their holistic development.

The significance of parental involvement in Canadian education, particularly within the framework of Catholic education, where values and teachings hold great importance, is evident. The ongoing conversations surrounding parental rights, school policies, and student well-being highlight the need for a balanced approach that upholds the core values and principles integral to Catholic education in Ontario. By fostering a strong partnership between parents and educators, schools can cultivate a supportive and nurturing environment that benefits all members of the educational community.

Upon examining the responses from the parent survey, several recurring themes emerged regarding the focus areas for the upcoming year at OAPCE. These themes include the importance of communication and community engagement, with parents underscoring the need for more effective communication among parents, teachers, and school administrators. They also expressed a desire for enhanced engagement within the school community to address specific needs and concerns.

The parent survey revealed a common thread where parents were requesting various parent information sessions on relevant educational topics. Additionally, popular ideas included workshops on parenting strategies and support, networking meetings for parents to connect and share experiences, opportunities for parent advocacy training, webinars, and online training sessions. Suggestions also included fostering events involving senior students, faith-based activities, and enhancing support for students with special needs. Overall, the prevailing theme centered around empowering parents through educational initiatives, support systems, and advocacy campaigns, aiming to enrich the educational experience for all stakeholders within the educational community.

"As representatives of OAPCE, we firmly believe in the vital role of parental engagement within the educational community, particularly in shaping the educational journey of our children. Parental involvement is essential in decision-making processes within Catholic schools, fostering a collaborative partnership between parents and educators to enhance the overall educational outcomes and experiences of students. Through increased parental participation, we can strengthen the bond between home, school and church, creating a supportive and nurturing environment for all members of the community." - Elizabeth Wylie, OAPCE Director, Hamilton.



## Supporting Student Achievement and Academic Success

Striving for academic excellence and supporting student achievement are fundamental objectives of educational institutions, with Catholic schools upholding these aspirations as well. In the pursuit of these goals, Catholic education institutes implement diverse strategies and initiatives aimed at enhancing student success and fostering academic growth. Through a range of programs, resources, and support systems, these schools seek to create an environment that nurtures academic excellence and empowers students to maximize their potential.

Survey findings from the over 750 respondents underscored strong support for student achievement and the cultivation of academic success within Catholic schools. This collaborative endorsement reflects a shared commitment to fostering a culture of academic excellence that aligns with the values and principles of Catholic education.

Parental engagement emerges as a pivotal factor influencing student outcomes, with research consistently highlighting the positive impact of parental involvement on academic performance, attendance, and overall student well-being. By actively engaging in their children's educational journey, parents play a vital role in creating a conducive learning environment that contributes to academic success.

In the realm of Catholic education, the dedication to academic excellence is intertwined with spiritual and moral development, reflecting a holistic approach to educational growth. Catholic schools emphasize the nurturing of the whole person, fostering intellectual, spiritual, and character growth in students. This comprehensive educational philosophy is manifested through various initiatives and programs designed to equip students with the skills and values necessary for their academic, personal, and spiritual development.

By exploring the multifaceted strategies and resources employed in Catholic schools to support student achievement, we gain insights into the inclusive and enriching educational environment within these institutions. The focus on academic excellence extends beyond grades to encompass a love for learning, critical thinking abilities, and a strong sense of purpose. Through collaboration among educators, parents, and the school community at large, Catholic schools create a supportive atmosphere where students are empowered to excel academically, grow personally, and embrace their full potential.

"As advocates for academic excellence and student achievement in Catholic education, OAPCE recognizes the paramount importance of fostering a culture that empowers students to thrive academically and reach their fullest potential. Through collaborative efforts and supportive strategies, Catholic schools aim to create an environment that cultivates academic success and nurtures the holistic growth of each student. This dedication to excellence aligns with the values and principles of Catholic education, fostering a culture of learning and growth that extends beyond the classroom." - Michael Brancatella, OAPCE Director, York.



## Respecting the Parent Role as the Child's First Educator

Parents hold an irreplaceable role as the primary educators in a child's life, laying the foundation for learning, instilling values, and fostering character development from early childhood. Within the realm of Catholic education, there is a deep reverence for the parents' essential role as the child's first and most influential teacher, with schools serving as collaborative partners in this educational journey. This section delves into the ways in which Catholic schools honor and support the pivotal role of parents in shaping their children's academic, moral, and spiritual growth. By underlining the significance of this partnership, we aim to enrich the educational experience and outcomes for students within Catholic schools.

The survey results revealed that 359 respondents highlighted the importance of parental involvement in decision-making processes as a top priority, emphasizing the value of active participation in shaping educational policies and practices.

Additionally, 347 respondents underscored the significance of respecting the parent's role as their child's initial educator, as one of three top priorities, recognizing the pivotal influence parents have on their child's education journey. This acknowledgment of parental importance underscores the integral partnership between parents and schools, wherein both entities work in harmony to nurture and support the holistic development of students.

In Catholic education, the collaboration between parents and schools extends beyond academics, encompassing spiritual formation, moral guidance, and character development. By valuing and supporting parents in their role as primary educators, Catholic schools create a cohesive educational environment where students receive consistent and holistic education that nurtures their intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. This collaborative approach reinforces the values and teachings of Catholic education and fosters a sense of community and partnership that enhances the overall educational experience for students.

"As an OAPCE representative, we recognize the invaluable role that parents play as the primary educators in their children's lives, shaping their academic, moral, and spiritual development from early on. In Catholic education, we hold a deep reverence for parents as the child's first and most influential teachers, working hand in hand with schools to enrich the educational

Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-being in Ontario

journey. By emphasizing the importance of this partnership, we strive to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for students within Catholic schools, nurturing an environment of shared values and mutual support." - Jenny Padula, OAPCE Director, York.



## Addressing Funding and Resource Issues in Catholic Education

Adequate funding and resources are foundational to the successful functioning of Catholic schools and the provision of quality education. This section delves into the complex landscape of challenges and opportunities associated with funding and resources in Catholic education. By examining strategies to overcome financial constraints and secure the sustainability of Catholic schools, we aim to ensure that students receive the necessary resources for academic success and personal growth.

The survey findings revealed that 350 respondents emphasized the critical importance of addressing issues concerning funding and resources in Catholic education. They advocated for robust support to sustain educational initiatives and enhance the overall educational experience for students.

The funding landscape in Catholic schools encompasses a myriad of complexities that have far-reaching implications for the delivery of quality education. At the forefront of these challenges is the issue of financial sustainability, with schools often grappling with balancing limited budgets against the increasing costs of operation. Securing stable and reliable funding sources is paramount to ensuring the long-term viability and effectiveness of Catholic schools in fulfilling their educational mission.

Equally critical is the concept of equitable resource allocation within Catholic schools. The equitable distribution of resources across various programs, departments, and student needs is essential to promoting a fair and inclusive educational environment. By ensuring that resources are allocated based on student needs, academic requirements, and the broader goals of Catholic education, schools can uphold principles of social justice and provide all students with an equal opportunity to thrive.

"Ensuring adequate funding and resources for Catholic schools is an ongoing commitment that requires constant attention and collaboration from all stakeholders at the table. OAPCE needs to be present when these discussions are taking place."- Lucy Goncalves, OAPCE Director, Toronto.

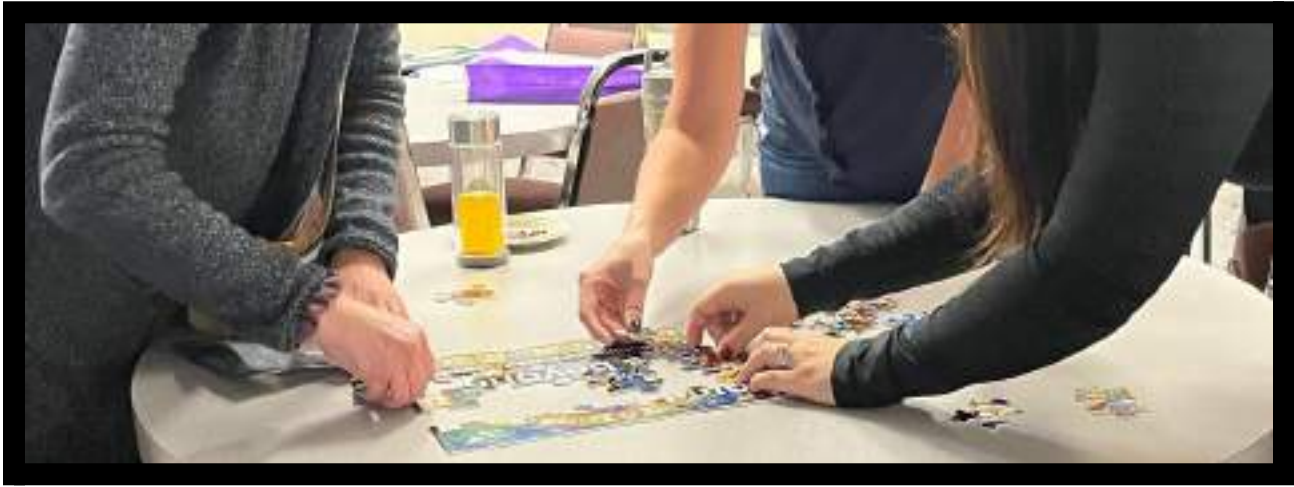
Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-being in Ontario



Moreover, the impact of funding constraints on educational programs and services cannot be understated. Insufficient funding can limit the scope and quality of programs offered, leading to potential cutbacks in extracurricular activities, specialized student services, and professional development opportunities for educators. These constraints may also hinder the implementation of innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and access to learning resources, ultimately impacting the overall educational experience for students.

Addressing these multifaceted funding challenges requires a strategic and collaborative approach that involves financial planning, advocacy efforts, and stakeholder engagement. By advocating for adequate funding, promoting transparency in resource allocation, and seeking innovative solutions to financial constraints, Catholic schools can ensure the sustainability of their educational programs and services while providing students with the resources they need to excel academically and personally.

"Empowering Catholic schools with adequate funding and resources is essential to nurturing quality education and ensuring the holistic growth of students. By addressing the challenges and opportunities surrounding funding, we pave the way for a sustainable and enriching educational experience that equips students for success and personal development. Through strategic planning, advocacy, and collaboration, we can secure the necessary resources to support academic excellence and foster a thriving educational environment for all." - Ashley Madonna, OAPCE Director, Simcoe-Muskoka.



## Conclusion: Preserving and Promoting Catholic Education for Student Success

In conclusion, the preservation and advancement of Catholic education in Ontario are crucial for the academic success, personal development, and overall well-being of students. By highlighting the pivotal role of parents as primary educators, nurturing student well-being and achievement, fostering faith formation, encouraging parental engagement, and addressing funding and resource challenges, Catholic education can continue to flourish and offer a nurturing and enriching educational journey for every student. Through collaborative endeavors and a dedication to excellence, we can collectively strive to uphold and enhance Catholic education for the optimal growth and success of students across Ontario.

Furthermore, the survey responses shed light on the various challenges and priorities identified by respondents, emphasizing the importance of advocating for policy changes, providing resources and support for parents, building relationships with stakeholders, enhancing partnerships, conducting informative workshops, allocating funds for students with additional needs, ensuring effective conflict resolution, promoting the adoption of school uniforms, and advocating for increased funding from provincial sources.

Overall, the survey responses underscore a diverse range of perspectives and priorities among participants, demonstrating a collective dedication to improving communication, fostering student well-being, encouraging parental involvement, and advocating for high-quality education within the Catholic education system. These insights reflect a shared commitment to enhancing the educational experience and ensuring the holistic development and success of students in Catholic schools.

## References:

2023 OAPCE Parent Survey

[2019-finance-brief-Final.pdf \(ocsta.on.ca\)](#)

<https://oapce.org/fostering-a-catholic-identity-in-catholic-schools/>

<https://oapce.org/home-school-and-church-working-together/>

[Ontario bishops commit to ‘renewing the promise’ of Catholic education \(catholicregister.org\)](#)

<https://www.catholicsteward.com/strengthening-your-catholic-faith-a-guide-to-spiritual-growth-and-faith-formation/#:~:text=Strengthening%20Your%20Catholic%20Faith%3A%20A%20Guide%20to%20Spiritua>

[h-formation/#:~:text=Strengthening%20Your%20Catholic%20Faith%3A%20A%20Guide%20to%20Spiritua](https://www.catholicsteward.com/strengthening-your-catholic-faith-a-guide-to-spiritual-growth-and-faith-formation/#:~:text=Strengthening%20Your%20Catholic%20Faith%3A%20A%20Guide%20to%20Spiritua)  
[l,Catholic%20Literature%20...%206%20Seek%20Spiritual%20Guidance%20](https://www.catholicsteward.com/strengthening-your-catholic-faith-a-guide-to-spiritual-growth-and-faith-formation/#:~:text=Strengthening%20Your%20Catholic%20Faith%3A%20A%20Guide%20to%20Spiritua)

<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/11/family-catechesis-telling-parents-you-can-do-this/>

<https://oapce.org/upholding-parental-rights-and-values-in-canadian-education/>

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/podcast/the-role-of-parents-in-educating-their-children/>

<https://www.ocsta.on.ca/about-ocsta/the-facts-ontario-education/>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19422539.2023.2276919>

[Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association | Faith in Education \(ocsta.on.ca\)](#)

[ACBO – Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario](#)

[Home - Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association \(OECTA\)](#)

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to our OAPCE representatives, parents and allies across the province who inspire us and honour us by allowing us the opportunity of representing them in all that we do.

Thank you to all our Educational Partners who we are privileged to know and work with for the betterment of all our children.

We thank our Spiritual leadership in His Grace, Archbishop Leo, Most Rev. Bishop Yvan Mathieu and all Clergy that work with us and who are our Shepherds and guide us in our Faith.

To our families and children, we are here and do what we do for you all.

**Annalisa Crudo-Perri and Joe Perri,**  
OAPCE Co-Executive Directors

**OAPCE Board of Directors:**

**Denice Garell-Teti,** OAPCE Chair, Halton  
**Elizabeth Wylie,** OAPCE Communications, Hamilton  
**Michael Brancatella,** York  
**Diana Carlesimo,** Dufferin Peel  
**Lucy Goncalves,** Toronto  
**Ashley Madonna,** Simcoe Muskoka  
**Jenny Padula,** York  
**Dianne Pawlowski,** Nippising/Parry Sound  
**Joel Tecson,** Toronto

– *Philippians 4:13*  
*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*